



Natural Resources Conservation Service  
One Credit Union Place, Suite 340  
Harrisburg, PA 1700-2993

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September 28, 2007

**PENNSYLVANIA BULLETIN NO. PA180-7-11**

**SUBJECT: CPA – Progressive Planning for PA Initiative “Put Planning First.”**

**Purpose.** To provide guidance to field employees on the minimum level of planning required to meet NRCS planning policy and leadership expectations on the delivery of conservation planning services.

**Expiration Date.** September 30, 2008

**Background:** The ultimate goal for NRCS planning assistance has always been and will continue to be the establishment of a complete plan for all resources – a resource management system (RMS). The National Planning Procedures Handbook (NPPH) describes the NRCS policy and procedure for carrying out conservation planning activities. The guidance in the NPPH handbook is focused on planning at the resource management system level. However, legislated programs existing at the National scale, such as the Food Security Act of 1985 as amended, define other levels of planning for specific resource issues. In addition, state regulations and laws may be directed at only certain kinds of resource concerns such as soil erosion and sedimentation or water quality concerns such as the application of animal manures and other forms of nutrients. The NPPH handbook is available on line at:  
[http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/media/pdf/H\\_180\\_600\\_A.pdf](http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/media/pdf/H_180_600_A.pdf) .

The job of the NRCS employee is to help landowners understand available conservation practices and motivate them to implement those that will provide the most long-term benefits to both the landowner and the natural resources. We should strive to recognize the resource problems of the landowners' operation and consider their goals, aims, wishes, and desires. We must always be cognizant of the fact that many landowners have financial limitations and cannot go along with every resource improvement that NRCS can identify or everything they would like to plan. Employees must be alert to cost-return aspects of the conservation treatment and be informed enough to discuss this freely with our clients.

NRCS refers to planning as “progressive” when a client is ready, willing, and able to make and implement some, but not all, of the decisions necessary to achieve an RMS level of management. When clients are limited to what and how rapidly they can apply a conservation plan, NRCS employees are to help them to plan their treatment so they can get the immediate benefits from their investments, consistent with long-range objectives. When the client shows interest in making additional decisions, planning and implementation should continue on a progressive basis following the typical planning process. These progressive procedures are based on the NRCS premise that clients will make and implement sound decisions if they understand their resources, natural resource problems and opportunities and the effects of their decisions.



Progressive plans are also compatible with USDA programs such as EQIP and Pennsylvania programs such as REAP, Chapters 91 & 102 and Farmland Preservation.

**Action.** NRCS supervisors are to ensure immediately that all employees providing conservation planning assistance understand the flexibility of providing progressive conservation planning assistance to clients in Pennsylvania.

/s/ William J. Bowers, Acting

**CRAIG R. DERICKSON**  
State Conservationist

**DIST: AO**